

Connacht Tribune embraces digitisation to increase revenues & cut costs

Overview

Business Challenge

- Complex photo workflow process
- Missed opportunity to generate revenue from photo sales
- Photo archive inaccessible
- High customer service workload providing photo prints

Solution

- Web-based Digital Asset Management System
- Outsourced photo fulfilment service

Benefits

- Improved workflow
- Better management of digital assets
- More accessible archive
- Cash revenue
- Increased page impressions
- Better customer service

West of Ireland newspaper generates tangible benefits from Digital Asset Management project

Despite celebrating its 100th birthday, Galway's Connacht Tribune newspaper has a youthful attitude to its digital future. In addition to ambitious plans for a new all Ireland Irish language newspaper *Gaelscéal*, with both print and online editions, the company has improved its editorial systems with a new Digital Asset Management (DAM) system to streamline the image workflow process and to commercialise new and archive photographs.

The newspaper, which celebrated its centenary last year, is the most popular regional newspaper in Ireland. As the main regional newspaper for County Galway, the Tribune Group prints three titles every week - the *Connacht Sentinel* on Tuesday, the *Connacht Tribune* on Thursday and the *Galway City Tribune* on Friday. Connacht Tribune Group newspapers are circulated in every district of the City and every town and village in the County.

During its 100 year history, an enormous photograph archive has accumulated which, until recently, has been dormant. When the Connacht Tribune introduced a DAM system to streamline its image management process and commercialise recently published photos, they quickly realised they could give readers access to the massive historical archive.

Their digital archive holds images from 2002 onwards, but as Chief Executive Dave Hickey notes "We have another 38 years of negatives which will be processed over the next few years." However, captioning the old unpublished photographs in the archive is a challenge. "If the photos have been published in the paper, then at least you have some context, but if they haven't, it can be a problem to identify them accurately." To aid the process, the Connacht Tribune "crowdsource" their readership. Every week they publish some of the archive and ask readers who recognise the photos to send any information they can. "People love to see old photos and are very helpful" says Mr Hickey.

The Connacht Tribune introduced the new DAM technology primarily to streamline the image workflow - the commercialisation became an added advantage. Photographers now have more control over the photos they upload: "It used to take 5 to 6 hours a week to sort through the photos, now all the photographers load the photos directly. And the process is fast; they can load a folder in two minutes." With improved internal efficiencies, a seamless workflow exists from image capture to storage, allowing the editors to select an image for the editorial system and the 'webmaster' to launch it to the web site by simply setting a flag.



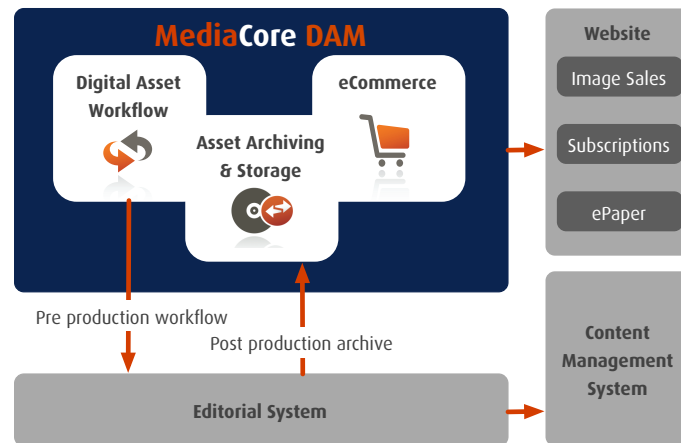
Pictured at the launch of the Connacht Tribune Photo Archive are David Hickey (CEO, Connacht Tribune), Aidan McGrath (CEO, Aetopia) & local photographer, Gerry Stronge

“As IT projects go, the DAM implementation was relatively easy, and has benefited numerous stake-holders including staff and readers.”

David Hickey, CEO Connacht Tribune

Dave Hickey explained. “Having taken the photos, the photographer assigns the destination folder and creates a caption. So when photos directed to the Sports Folder arrive, an email with thumbnails and captions is automatically generated for the Sports Editor who can instantly select an image and assign it to a particular page in the Editorial system. All (or some) of the photos, including the one chosen for print, can be flagged ‘for sale’ and a watermarked thumbnail is automatically generated on the web site.”

MediaCore from Aetopia, the system selected by the Connacht Tribune, has made the entire archive available to the newsroom. “The search facility is excellent, so journalists can now delve through the digital archive of 170,000 images.” As it’s totally web-based, readers, too, can search through the archive and purchase prints. These photographs were dormant or would have been filed away for no particular future use. Now the archive is alive for the public to search and buy.



Customer service has also been improved. Readers can now purchase prints of all the photos from an event, even though only one or two may have been printed in the paper. “Despite the recession the public response has been good and sales of photos have remained steady. The big sellers are photos of social events and children.” The old local newspaper philosophy pertains; readers love photos of themselves and the people they know.

At a time when newspapers need to capitalise on their media assets, the sale of photos – photos that would otherwise remain stuck in inaccessible servers – is a profitable activity.

“From where I am sitting now, I can look out onto the street. We put photos in the window and I can see passers-by stopping to look at them. And it’s the same on our digital shop front on the web site. People visit the site and stay to look at the photos. It gives the web site stickiness.”

The Connacht Tribune has enjoyed benefits on numerous levels from the implementation of their DAM system: improved workflow, better management of digital assets, a more accessible archive, cash revenue from both current and archive photographs, increased page impressions and better customer service.

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ECIT Institute
Queen’s Road
Belfast BT3 9DT
T +44 28 9099 8767
F +44 28 9189 8731
www.aetopia.com
skype: aetopia

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